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ABSTRACT

Written from the vantage point of a library personnel director, this paper presents recent graduates of M.L.S. programs with practical guidance for finding first jobs. It covers four basic areas: (1) the ways one may look for a job, (2) what one should expect from an employer in the employment processes and on the job, (3) what an employer expects in the same circumstances, and (4) recent trends and projections for placement. (RAA)

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Finding a Position: Strategies for Library School Graduates

by

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS

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INTRODUCTION

An examination of the literature of our profession over the years shows evidence of concern for placement, employment conditions, and salaries of library school graduates. In the past decade an obvious need has developed for creative thinking and action on the part of nearly every graduate who faces the prospects of entering a changing job market. How much that market has changed and in what directions are topics of a number of studies which appear each year in the literature and are readily available. For the graduate in need of direction in the search for a position, the material is not quite so readily available, and examination in depth of job search strategy is of more recent vintage.

Prior to retirement, the last twelve years of my professional career were spent in the position of Director of Personnel for the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign. That library personnel office has the basic responsibility for the employment and records of nearly 1000 professional, clerical and student staff members. Very early in my years in that office, I became acutely aware of and actively concerned with the problems graduating library school students were facing as they attempted to find positions. Since the Graduate School of Library and Information Science is located on that university campus, the University Library has always offered both hourly and assistantship positions to the students in the school. The longer I worked with these students, and the better I came to know them, the more I became aware that almost no one seemed to be advising them in any depth concerning the methods they should be using in their searches for positions after graduation. They seemed to know very little of what to expect and what was expected of them in the process.

I began to work in this area by talking with graduate assistants who were working in the library while completing the MLS program. I then let it be known that I would be glad to talk with anyone who was preparing to search for a position, and began a series of individual consultations which were especially rewarding, because I learned a great deal myself in the process of discussing the subject with these students. Before long I was being asked to talk to groups of students in different areas of the library and, eventually, I began to build a body of information and material which led in 1974 to a speaking engagement at the Florida State University School of Library Science in Tallahassee. This paper updates this information and material, reflecting my recent impressions.

The employment picture for librarians has changed greatly over the years. How much it has changed in the past century is evidenced by a fascinating

quotation to be found in "History of the University of Illinois Library, 1868-1897," in which Lucile Elizabeth Wilcox presented this description of a nineteenth-century librarian at the University of Illinois:

> In October 1872 the executive committee approved the appointment of Mr. Rolfe as the assistant overseeing the library and museum at a salary of forty dollars per month. He also taught botany, geology, commercial arithmetic, book-keeping, physiology, and zoology, even if he was supposed to be doing graduate work half-time. As he did not have much time for graduate work, he resigned at the end of the year.[1]

Time, as always, changes things, and the status of librarians today is hardly reminiscent of this 1872 appointment at Illinois. In recent years, however, we seem to have been faced with another problem: a library world in which there seem to be more librarians than jobs. The first indication came in the 1960s, in the major cities and on the big research institution campuses of the country. I remember vividly when a top graduate of the Columbia University School of Library Service wrote a letter to one of the journals in which she indicated that she could not find a job anywhere in the metropolitan area of New York at the time of her graduation. That was a real shock, since it came at a time when people in the field were still walking around talking about 23,000 library jobs open and available in the United States. There remains considerable confusion about the job market for librarians, and since a beginning librarian is required to enter that marketplace almost immediately, it remains for those of us with experience in this area to do everything possible to assist these new professionals in their searches for jobs. There are many things a new graduate can do to enhance his or her job search potential, and discussing these is the basic purpose of this paper.

I intend to cover four basic areas. First, I will examine the ways in which you may look for a job; second, I will approach the subject of what you should expect from an employer in the employment processes and while you are on the job; third, I will go into what an employer should expect from you in these same circumstances; and fourth, I will consider placement in recent years to see if any intelligent projections can be made for the future.

JOB SEARCHING PROCEDURES

There exists considerable disagreement about job searching procedures; some procedures appear to be orthodox, some unorthodox. Some people try one approach, some another. Then there is the approach I used to

describe as "try anything and everything on alternate days of the week, depending on which way the wind is blowing." There may be more wisdom than foolishness in that statement. Whatever approach you take, these are some of the things you can do to improve your chances.

Library Placement Sources

How do you find out about job openings? For a general approach to library placement sources, I would refer you to an excellent, compact article which appears each year in the *Bowker Annual of Library & Book Trade Information*. This article, "Guide to Library Placement Sources," is compiled by Margaret Myers, Director of the Office for Library Personnel Resources of the American Library Association.[2] You would do well to read through this report, and to continue to do so as future editions appear.

Myers examines the job vacancy listings which appear regularly in the library literature, ranging from *American Libraries* to *Wilson Library Bulletin*, all national in scope. Vacancy listings also are carried in some of the publications of regional and state library associations and agencies. She lists these potential sources with comments as to the frequency of issue and the procedures for their use. She also notes the need for consideration of the classified ads in our newspapers, and appropriately notes the special section on librarian openings which appears in the Sunday edition of the *New York Times* "Week in Review" section.

Included in this article is a detailed listing of library joblines or job "hotlines" which offer taped telephone messages about job vacancies in specific geographical areas. Myers also notes that these jobline numbers are carried in each issue of *American Libraries*.

An annotated list covering specialized library associations and groups which offer placement services and/or job listings has entries ranging from the American Association of Law Libraries to the Special Libraries Association, and also includes the information you need to make use of these services.

Library schools across the country offer placement services of varying types to their current students and alumni. Some schools now are going into more detailed and formal programs in a concentrated effort to help their students find positions, and Myers devotes considerable attention to description of these activities.

Anyone interested in employment in a federal government library will want to read the coverage Myers offers for these libraries. Application procedures for government employment tend to be far more structured than for most areas, and all applicants for such positions need to be aware of the regulatory requirements.

Myers details additional general and specialized job sources, which include the *Affirmative Action Register*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and such other sources as the Educational Information Service and the Federal Research Service. Though job opportunities are limited where overseas employment is concerned, the report covers this area and lists a number of information sources.

Myers concludes her report with two extremely useful sections. She provides a summary of the growing interest in and concern for using information skills in nonlibrary settings. Since positions in these areas are not often found in regular, library-oriented sources, graduates will want to be aware of the sources she lists. She completes the report with her own general comments on job hunting and suggests that those interested in additional information should feel free to request a checklist of personnel materials available from the Office for Library Personnel Resources, American Library Association, 50 East Huron, Chicago, Ill. 60611. Under Margaret Myers's able direction, this ALA office has produced a considerable body of information and material concerning all areas of library personnel, and the resources of her office are available to all ALA members and libraries.

The Résumé

One of your earliest chores will be the preparation of a really good résumé. Whether you are going to carry it with you or send it with a covering letter when making a job inquiry, the better the résumé, the better your chances that someone will pay attention to it. You must remember that, in many instances, this résumé is a potential employer's first glimpse of you and your background, and strong, lasting impressions may be formed. An attractive, well-organized résumé may open the door to a really productive job interview. Though résumés may be designed along either chronological or functional lines, it has been my experience that most people prefer the chronological approach. This approach permits an easy examination of activities in a natural kind of progression. This résumé is going to supply important information about you as a person, your education, work experience, and any additional information relative to your back-

ground and abilities which may help to single you out as a likely candidate for a position. (A sample résumé is included as an appendix to this paper.)

You should begin by supplying such personal information as your full name, complete address, telephone numbers where you may be reached during as many hours of the day as possible, your Social Security Number, and any other information you feel may be relevant to the employment process. By law, employers no longer are able to require certain information about you. Such information includes items of personal data which are affected by nondiscriminatory regulations covering race, sex, color, national origin, age, marital status, physical disability, or veteran status—none of which may be used in any part of the selection process. Even if this information is volunteered by a candidate, it may not legally be used in the selection process. If you are dealing with a potential employer who would make a decision based on this type of information, I strongly suggest that this is an organization for which you may not care to work. List your education in chronological order, and make certain that you indicate your major and minor subjects clearly. It is good to list any additional courses you may have taken after receiving your degrees. Extracurricular activities, honors, scholarships, and school offices held are all logical entries in this area.

I believe that your working experience should be cited in reverse chronological order and your present position should be described in the greatest detail, with prior positions in less detail. Language skills are important, and should be described carefully. I have found that many people do this badly, and there is a need here for some direction. If you say that you have a reading and speaking knowledge of a language, this means to me that you have a genuine ability with that language and that you really can function with it. If you indicate that you have a bibliographic knowledge of a language, this means to me that you know enough of the language to be able to describe materials bibliographically, with the aid of dictionaries as needed. I would suggest that you think of your language abilities in those terms and describe them accordingly. Under an area I refer to as "miscellaneous," you should list any activities in which you have been involved which were concerned with professional associations or community service, plus any of the things you have done which have any relationship to your career development while in school or after graduation. If you have been able to have any of your writing published, it may be cited at the end of the résumé in the appropriate bibliographic form. During the preparation of a résumé is no time for you to have an attack of modesty. Don't make up a potential employer's mind for him; use the information you feel is

important and will best describe the qualities and abilities you can bring to a position.

When it comes to listing references on your résumé, always list at least three. It is of the utmost importance that you ask all of these people in advance for permission to use their names. You must list these people with full names, titles, and complete mailing addresses. I have found that many library school students reach this point in their résumés and simply indicate that references are available in a placement folder held by the library school. It is a simple fact of life that this folder will very often not be an acceptable substitute for letters of reference. Library schools themselves place restrictions on the use of placement folders, and frequently they must be returned to the library school or destroyed, and often they may not be copied. In such instances, the employing library has no documentation to forward with the proposed appointment and must obtain other letters. If you want to indicate that a placement folder is available, by all means do so. Most employers already know that they exist, and will request a folder directly from the school if it is desired. You should list the people you have asked to do letters for such a folder, so that if it is necessary for a library to go beyond the folder, the names and addresses of such persons are readily available and further correspondence is not required. You should not feel that prospective employers will request original letters from faculty members so frequently that it would be annoying; they will do so only when it is necessary and when a candidate is being given serious consideration.

It is best for your résumé to be no more than one or two pages in length. Later on in your career, a more lengthy résumé may be quite appropriate, and it is my opinion that, at that point, the length of such forms really is not the important thing. What is important is that you present an accurate picture of yourself and your background. Your résumé should have very clear headings which set apart the various areas. A sloppy résumé simply will not do. You already have invested a considerable amount of time and money in your career, and a few more pennies spent on the reproduction of an attractive and effective résumé will bring rewards later. As your career develops, it is wise to keep a copy of your résumé constantly updated so that a new one may be produced at any time.

Letters of Application

If you are answering an advertisement or sending out an unsolicited request for information concerning either a specific position or the availability of openings, your résumé should be sent with an original covering

letter. Skip the form letter; they never irritated me if they were well prepared, but many colleagues have told me they were turned off completely by form letters. If you expect an individual reply (and you have every right to expect one), it is well worth sending out an original letter yourself. Students and colleagues have advised me over the years that the sending of unsolicited letters requesting information concerning the availability of openings is a total waste of time and paper, and that many libraries do not answer unsolicited mail. This reaction I do not understand; all correspondence was answered in my office, painful as the effort may have been at times. I always have felt that a professional librarian looking for a job deserved some attention, and that it would be bad manners, if nothing else, not to respond in some way to an inquiry. I also insisted that letters which came into my office be answered within twenty-four hours, unless there was something special about the information requested which would require considerable time for the preparation of a response.

When you write to any library, remember that you are a professional librarian *now*—and you are acquainted with a publication called the *American Library Directory*. Use that directory and address your letter carefully. Very often, you can identify the actual person who will be responsible for answering your letter. If you have reason to believe the directory is out of date, you should take steps to obtain the most recent listings available. You would not believe the numbers of letters which go out addressed to "Head Librarian" with inadequate or incorrect addresses. It would be my conservative estimate that over 30 percent of the mail I received in my working years was poorly addressed. Again, you should remember that any letter you write is your first impression on a potential employer, and that impression may be a lasting one.

When you answer a classified advertisement for a position, make certain that you have read the advertisement carefully. If you do not have one or more of several minimum requirements for the position, you are probably wasting your time, and the library's, in answering the ad. On the other hand, some job descriptions are inadequate, and if you have questions concerning your ability to handle a position, write to the library and ask for additional explanation of the requirements. When you write such letters, make certain you specify the exact position for which you are applying. Over the years I received far too many letters which referred to "your opening" at times when we were dealing with a number of vacancies, and there was absolutely no way of knowing which position was involved. This requires additional correspondence and provides another

irritant in the process, which does not create a good impression of the prospective candidate.

If you have long-term employment objectives, say something about them and indicate the manner in which you believe the position in which you are interested suits these objectives. Don't panic, however, if you don't have long-term objectives at this stage of your career. There is no reason why you should be required to identify such objectives the day you graduate from library school and most prospective employers will recognize your need for time to firm up your goals as you gain actual work experience. You are not expected to come out of school, take a position, and then remain in that work area indefinitely.

Indicate the earliest date on which you would be available for employment. I received many letters in which applicants indicated that they would be available when school ended, but no actual dates were given. You also should state if you are willing to travel for a personal interview. Though it was a popular process years ago, not many potential employers send representatives to library schools today to conduct interviews with graduating students. (If such representatives do come, however, I would suggest that you avail yourself of the opportunity to talk to them, since it may be one of your first opportunities to learn how to handle yourself in an interview. You also may have someone coming to a school who is just looking for a list of potential graduates for future reference, and when there is an opening, if that person has had a personal interview with you, he or she may recall that interview and contact you again.)

Placement Services

Let us move on now to placement services; there are different types, and they all merit some attention. One finds a variety of placement services offered by library schools in this country. Many library schools have their own placement services, offices, placement officers, and staffs large and competent enough to do a really good placement job. Other library schools have to turn over their placement services to a centralized placement office in the institution in which they are located. My impression, developed over the years, is that those library schools which have their own placement services do a better job for their graduates, and are much more understanding of the unique problems in library placement work. I have also found that when job descriptions are sent to a centralized placement office, the task of advertising or listing may be turned over to someone who is unfamiliar with library terminology, and the position may be described poorly. I remember a time when such a placement service listed a vacancy

we had for the position of Assistant Head of the Catalog Department. The title for the position happened to be that of Assistant Catalog Librarian, but the job description indicated very clearly that the position involved the assistant headship of the department. This detail was ignored completely by the placement service in question, and they simply announced nationwide that the University of Illinois Library was searching for an Assistant Cataloger. We were swamped with replies from candidates who had been totally misled by the entry. I resent the time taken by the victims of such failures in communication, as well as the energy expended by the libraries which must explain why an applicant is not qualified. Placement bulletins or listings handled by library school placement offices generally give a sufficiently clear job description to enable you to decide whether you can meet the requirements for the position. Before you leave library school, I suggest that you find out exactly how your school's placement service works and what information and contact the office needs from you in order to function on your behalf. I have been amazed at the number of people who have told me that their schools never do anything for them, and I discover that they have not even taken the time to keep the school's placement office advised of changes of address, new positions held, or desires to find a new position. Your school's placement service will work for you, but you must give these people a little assistance and information.

Placement services operating at meetings of professional associations have been in ill repute in years past, with descriptions which run along the lines of "cattle stampede" and "meat rack" whenever the subject is brought up. I am well aware that the American Library Association has been spending a considerable amount of time and effort to revamp the placement services offered to students and employers at its midwinter and annual conferences, and it is my impression that they are continually improving the processes. Employers do find people through these services, but the vast majority of positions listed in these conference services seem to require experience or special qualifications and often are middle- or upper-level administrative positions. However, if you are able to attend these conferences and want to gain additional experience, you certainly should contact the service and see how it works for you.

On the Road

A new approach has developed in the past ten years—actually going out on the road to look for positions. Since potential employers are not coming to the library schools, beginning jobs often are not found in advertising, and other sources seem to have dried up, librarians have been taking to the road; and some of them are reporting surprising success. If you can afford

to take this approach, I recommend it to you wholeheartedly. I cannot imagine that a person who has graduated from library school would walk into any given library on any given day and not be able to talk to someone who would be interested enough to discuss the employment situation and job possibilities in that library. It might be necessary to go back a few hours later to see the right person, but it would be well worth your time and effort. There are so many beginning librarians available in some areas today that some libraries simply are not posting beginning-level position openings, they are not advertising them widely, and they are making temporary appointments which are far less demanding to process. You might walk into a library just when they have had a unexpected opening; it happens all the time.

Carol Stancil Burroughs, a 1973 graduate, wrote a brief article for the *Wilson Library Bulletin* entitled "Life After Library School: The Pursuit of a Position." I felt that her assessment of the process of going out on the road was accurate and interesting, and some of her comments follow:

> "...letter writing to find a position, no matter what I had to say about myself or how uniquely I could say it, was nearly a total waste of time...."
>
> "...ALA...placement service...turned out to be one of the worst encounters I had in my whole job-hunting experience....It was the only time I truly felt I was in a flesh market of the unemployed....undignified and unproductive experiences...."
>
> "Since placement offices and letter writing had proved fruitless, I realized I would have to develop a new method of job hunting. I hadn't expected to look for a professional, career position by going door-to-door, asking for the boss and saying I was looking for work, but that is exactly what I did. Besides finding and getting just the kind of job I wanted, I visited over sixty libraries, met and talked with people in many fields of librarianship, saw all sorts of library buildings and systems, and learned quite a bit about the real job situation. I did wear out a pair of shoes in the process, but it surely was worth it."
>
> "I felt my placement folder produced by the library school was a careless, sloppy, haphazard affair that was more of a liability than an asset, and chose to work at finding a job without it; most directors did not ask to see it."
>
> "The question I was asked almost everywhere was, 'What is your main interest in librarianship?' "
>
> "At any rate, I never did try to fake it. I had thought about it and knew what kind of a job I wanted, and said so. It worked out better to be open and to be myself."
>
> "One placement officer I encountered gave me an instruction sheet on job hunting which, based on my experience, seems quite accurate and appropriate. Other assets are the mobility to be able to go where you can find work, and the flexibility to be able to accept more than one kind of

> job. I also found it an advantage to have been from another part of the country, and to have attended a different library school than most other applicants in the area."[3]

Later, I will quote from the instruction sheet referred to above. I believe you will find it interesting. I was particularly impressed with the author's concern for "being herself." I always have advised students to be completely honest in interviews. Express your interests, say what you want from a job, what your lifestyle is, how you dress, whatever you do, but be completely honest about it. Don't go into an interview pretending to be one person, and then have the employer go into shock when you report for work as a totally different person. Most people are going to be willing to accept you at face value and do not want you to pretend to be someone you are not. They should respect you for being honest, and if they don't, again I would suggest that this may be an organization for which you would not care to work.

It is obvious today that you need to be as flexible as possible, especially where location is concerned. The people who seem to have the most difficulty now are those who are captive to an area, or who have such strong feelings about the kind of job they will take that they develop a condition bordering on complete strangulation. There are areas where there simply are no jobs from time to time. If you decide to take the travel-around approach, I suggest that you talk to friends, to your faculty, and to any librarians you may know. Librarians tend to be gregarious, well-traveled people, and most of them know people all over the United States, as well as abroad. I have written many letters of introduction for students to carry to librarians in areas which they planned to visit. Such a letter frequently paves the way to a more productive interview. But with or without such letters, go!

The Interview

Job interviewing, like supervision, can be an art. It also can be an extremely dreadful experience. Since there is not a great deal you can do to alter the manner in which prospective employers conduct their interviews, you will do well to prepare for an interview as thoroughly as possible.

Once a date has been set for a personal job interview, your first step will be to acquire as much information as you can about the position, the library, and the organization or institution in which the position is located. A lot of this background may be found in published sources. In the rare event that you cannot find anything in print, start asking everyone you know if they have any of the information which will help you. If time permits, you also

may wish to contact the library where you are going and ask them to send you such printed materials as organization charts, annual reports, statements of goals and objectives, etc.

Study these materials with care. The background information you gather will enable you to respond better to questions from those conducting the interview, and also to pose intelligent questions of your own. If you have a firm idea of the information you hope to gain from the interview, you stand a good chance of coming away with a good understanding of the prospective job and the organization in which it is located. Interviewers will respect you for the background you have acquired. This knowledge also makes it possible for you to revitalize an interview situation which appears to be reaching a stagnant impasse. Any appropriate question from you may switch the subject and open new paths to a more productive discussion.

You need to put yourself into the best possible frame of mind for the interview. If you are to make your best impression, you will need to appear relaxed, at ease, and in full control of what some people find to be an excruciating experience, overloaded with pressure. Generally speaking, you should be treated with tact, consideration and cordiality. (If you are treated otherwise, it may be that your ability to perform under pressure is being tested.)

Interviews may vary in length from minutes to several days, depending on the level of the position and the formalized hiring procedures of the organization involved. In many instances, you will find yourself involved in what appear to be almost purely social activities. Such activities may be extremely pleasant, but you must remember that the people you meet in these situations are looking at you in the same manner as those responsible for conducting the more formal interview segments. Relax, be yourself, and enjoy the process as much as you can. If you have done your homework properly, when you are introduced to various individuals and groups, you will know why you have been introduced to them.

I think you should be prepared in any interview session to discuss your basic philosophy of librarianship and also to give some of your own impressions as to what you might be able to contribute to the organization in question. If there are any limitations or deficiencies in your background, you should be prepared to discuss them, with emphasis on the positive side of these limitations. If salary is discussed, you should feel free to ask what the range may be, particularly if this information is not volunteered. You may wish to indicate that the salary question is open to discussion as far as

you are concerned. It is most unlikely that any formal salary would be set in an initial interview situation.

When the interview period has ended, you should express your appreciation for the invitation to interview and make an effort to thank any individuals who have acted as hosts on a more personal basis. If the interviewer does not bring up the procedures which will follow, you have every right to ask for such information. Most organizations should be able to give you some sort of timetable for the final decision on filling the position in question. If an extended interview involving travel has taken place, you would do well to write a follow-up letter to the responsible person, expressing continued interest in the job and appreciation for the invitation to interview. If the travel has been at the prospective employer's expense, it is most important that you sign and return all of the required forms promptly.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE EMPLOYER

Graduating students approaching their first professional positions seem to be unaware of what they should expect from an employer during the hiring process and during their first years of employment. The following is a summary of the things I believe you should expect from an employer under these stated circumstances.

Terms of the Position

First, you should see a well-defined job description and receive a very careful explanation of the minimum requirements for the position. There are terms of employment, differing from organization to organization, and it is important that you receive them in some clear form—or you should ask questions. These are the things I feel you should know about an organization. First (obviously), the salary. When do you get paid? How do you get paid? What about holidays, vacations, sick leave, disability leave, and similar benefits? If there are retirement plans or programs, what are they, and are they mandatory or voluntary? Some organizations may belong to institutions which have retirement plans in which you may have an option for a number of years before you are required to participate. During your first years on the job, if library school has been a severe financial drain, it may be possible for you to delay participation in the plan until you are back on a better financial footing. My point in going into all of this is to make certain that you obtain all of this information *in advance of your employment*. Insurance? Virtually all organizations and institutions have

insurance programs of some kind which may include hospitalization, life, accident, and or travel insurance, and you should find out exactly what the coverage is, what it costs, and how much of it may be paid by the employing organization. Any library should see that you get organization charts, handbooks, annual reports, statistics, and publications describing the library organization and its operation—preferably in a form which you may take with you for examination in depth at a later time. I believe that you should know whether you are dealing with an employer who will be interested enough in your professional growth to encourage you to become involved in professional activities outside of the library. Is there time for travel? Is there time for conferences? Are there travel funds? In these years of budgetary restrictions, many institutions have been forced to curtail travel funds. You should see well-defined criteria and guidelines for promotion. You must have an indication of how you can grow on the job, or you may be wasting your time. The question of job tenure should be discussed with you in detail.

Orientation

Once you are on the job, a well-planned orientation program is essential. Such programs may be formal or informal, but they should take you through the areas which involve the department in which you will be working so that you can understand the work processes, the lines of authority, and the manner in which the departmental functions affect and interact with those of other departments. Attention also should be paid to the position of the library in the institution which it serves. Many libraries have compiled written sets of objectives, which will lead you to a better understanding of relationships and responsibilities. I think it is extremely important that you be aware of a noticeably friendly and helpful attitude on the part of the people with whom you will be working, and I think you should be able to see some of that during the interviewing process, as well as during your early days on the job. The lines of authority, responsibility and communication should be well drawn and readily visible; if no one seems to know who does what or when they do it, and you sense this very early in the game, I would take another, very careful look at this organization. I also think that it should be clear to you, after a respectable period of time, that if you do not like the kind of work you are doing, or if you have some logical reason for wanting to try something else for a variety of experience, that you are not dealing with an employer who wishes you to be pigeonholed, and considers it to be too much trouble to shift staff around for such reasons. This is the quickest way I know to stifle staff development and destroy morale.

Evaluation

You should be told whether there is a formal evaluation program for the staff and exactly how it works. Such formal programs are comparatively new in the professional fields, but they have existed for years in civil service systems, and they have been accepted as standard operating procedure. Whatever the evaluation system is, it should enable you to have a recurring communication with your supervisor in which your progress on the job is recorded and commented upon, and in which you have an opportunity to make whatever response you wish. This record is always signed, both by the employee and by the immediate supervisor, and generally forwarded through channels to a final authority, where it becomes a permanent part of the person's personnel records. Such records are extremely valuable when the time comes for processing such actions as promotions and salary increases. The simple steps provided for in a formal evaluation system are deterrents to the situation in which an employee is never advised formally of his progress (or lack of progress) on the job, and should be taken seriously by all involved. The process may be referred to as communications insurance.

The process of supervision and the manner in which it is conducted when you first start working will be extremely important to you. Supervision, as you know, is a genuine art, practiced with or without talent by literally thousands of professional people. You should hope that the supervision in your case will be carried out with understanding, teaching skill, and effective human relationships. If you get this, you will be fortunate indeed. Remember that your response to the training and supervision will have much to do with its effectiveness. Especially in the beginning, you will want to keep an open mind and make every attempt to absorb as much as you can. If things are moving too rapidly, don't let the situation get out of hand before you give the supervisor an indication that you are unable to retain the required information at that speed. Any reasonable supervisor will make adjustments. Don't be afraid to ask questions; don't be afraid to ask why things are done in a certain way. A good supervisor will be attentive to your reactions and interest.

WHAT THE EMPLOYER EXPECTS FROM YOU

Commitment

The other side of the coin, naturally, involves an examination of the things an employer has a right to expect from you under similar conditions.

When you are being interviewed, I believe that your potential employer has a right to be apprised of your honest interest in the position in question. If you are asked to travel for an interview at a library's expense, I suggest that you carefully consider not going if you are not seriously interested in the position. Travel funds are severely limited in many institutions and organizations today. I also suggest, especially in your first position, that you go with the intention of staying at least two years. One reason I feel so strongly about this is that students have repeatedly told me that they did not get enough of the "real world" in library school, and that the first year in most positions tends to be a genuine learning experience. No library school can give you the total "real world" of librarianship. There are too many libraries, too many different types of organizations and institutions, too many practical considerations which never could be covered in the kind of depth that would prepare you fully for everything you will encounter on the job. You will have the theory and basics, which are the province of your library school training, and from there, your first year of work will be a continued period of training and learning. That first year will involve so much training that you will come to realize (in most instances) that you owe the institution at least one additional year just to repay the time and energy devoted to your training. After two years, however, if you want to make a change, I feel that you have justification for such a move.

Early in your period of employment, I suggest that you learn everything you can about your job, the department, the library, the institution, and the community in which the institution functions. Involve yourself, both inside and outside of the library. There is another world out there, on any campus, in any municipality, in any company, in any school situation; there are all kinds of people who need to be sold on library services, who can help a library to get what it must have to function, and it is up to you to get out and get to know these people. In the first place, you will enjoy the variety of people you will meet, and you do not need to live in your library world twenty-four hours each day. Investigate active participation in professional associations. If you are starting out after library school and find that you are financially strapped, you may need to limit this participation at first, but you can start out in local and state association work, and the sooner you become involved, the better. You will find all sorts of splinter groups which have come from the parent organizations, and by participating in these groups, you can get to know colleagues in your areas of interest and begin to expand your horizons and acquaintances. All of these activities will serve you well in the future, and will increase your enjoyment of your professional life and work.

Leaving the Job

If and when you decide to leave an organization, it is of the utmost importance that you give the organization adequate notice of your impending departure. If you happen to be working in a situation in which you have a contract, remember that you looked upon that contract as the institution's commitment to honor its obligation to you. It also works the other way. No organization should stand in your way if you have an opportunity to go to something that really would mean a great deal to you and your career, providing you give them as much time as possible to replace you. In the academic world there actually are formal agreements among institutions about transfers of professional staff. Such agreements began years ago with the "Big Ten" universities, and soon became a standard policy of the Association of American Universities. Under such agreements, an institution is not supposed to make an offer of employment to a staff member in a participating institution after a certain date in the year, unless there is mutual agreement between the administrations of the institutions involved that such offers be made. This requirement came about as a reaction to an age-old practice of robbing staff from other institutions with no regard for the timing of such moves. Since there are such standardized procedures governing departures from organizations, you would do well to become acquainted with these procedures as they are followed in the organization in which you work.

RECENT TRENDS

In approaching the current employment picture and in any discussion of placement and salary statistics for library school graduates, one's attention is drawn immediately to a major compilation which appears annually in *Library Journal*. Currently, the study is put together with comments by Carol Learmont, Associate Dean, School of Library Service, Columbia University; and Stephen Van Houten, PHILSOM Librarian, Medical Library Center of New York. The most recent report appeared in the October 1, 1981, issue of *Library Journal*, and is the thirtieth of such annual reports.[4] The 1981 report covers placement and salaries in 1980, and lists responses from sixty-three of the sixty-nine ALA-accredited library schools contacted. I recommend that you scan reports from several years, which will give you some firm indications of a number of specific trends in placement and salaries for beginning librarians.

The report contains sections with statistical summaries and commentaries for such areas as status, placement and salaries of 1980 graduates; place-

ments by type of library; average salaries for starting library positions; high and low salaries by type of library; and effects of experience on salaries. Most interesting, perhaps, is the comment indicating that forty-five of the responding library schools had no major difficulty in placing their 1980 graduates. Only four schools reported major difficulty.[5] The study reports an ongoing scarcity of people with math, science, business and language backgrounds. As you would suspect, the demand for background in the information sciences continues, and such training offered by library schools enhances the employment opportunities for their graduates. Cataloging and children's work are two other areas where more people are needed.

The 63 responding schools awarded 4396 first professional degrees, 743 fewer than the 5139 reported as awarded in 1979.[6] The drop in total number of graduates continues a trend noted in previous years. If this trend persists, it well could ease some of the job searching pressures in some areas.

Salaries for 1980 improved over those for 1979, but again fell well below the increase in the cost of living. Salary figures are not quoted here, since they go out of date so rapidly; they are readily available in the Learmont studies.

Last year I contacted Carol Stancil Burroughs to see what had happened to her since she wrote the *Wilson Library Bulletin* article in 1973. I received a letter from her dated February 4, 1981, and she has graciously consented to allow me to quote from her letter.[7]

The position Carol found by going out on the road was as a reference librarian at the University of California, Los Angeles. After six years there, she accepted a position as Head of Public Services, Crosby Library, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington. I think it would be fair to say that her opinions about job searching have not changed much. She has been on both sides of the hiring fence now, and I want to quote some of her comments which emphasize some of the points made in this paper.

> The letter of application. This, I think, tells a lot about the applicant which the résumé does not. It can show how well the person writes, how he/she communicates, how enthusiastic they are, and reflects something of the applicant's personality. A résumé is perforce general, and the letter can be used to emphasize experience and other qualifications that pertain to a specific job. I find that a well-written, interesting letter from a qualified applicant makes a positive impression of a *real* person who is interested enough in the job to write about it, and it really makes an applicant stand out in reading through a stack of résumés. I am surprised at how often people fail to take advantage of this opportunity. Applicants still send out two-line letters of application saying, "Hello, I'd like

to apply, here is my résumé, fly me out for an interview anytime. Goodbye."

From my own experience and that of other librarians I know who have sought and found jobs recently, I know that many libraries—especially academic libraries—are asking applicants to submit an essay on a topic suggested by the would-be employer. This will require some organization, creative thinking and good writing ability. I think job seekers should be prepared for this.

Tacky BooBoos Department: no matter how often people are told (or maybe they aren't told and we assume that as professionals they should know), I see letters handwritten, typed with faded, near-to-death ribbons, typos, no margins, etc. These stand out as being bad and sift to the bottom of the heap. I see badly-done résumés with basic omissions, such as listing of job title but with no description of responsibilities, or vice versa, or other poor techniques. Applicants still come up with comments in interviews like: "Do I have to wear a tie here? I really hate dressing up."

Finally, for new graduates especially, I would suggest that they be reasonable about their qualifications and expectations. I have repeatedly seen numbers of new grads with virtually no experience apply for management-level positions in which they would be expected to direct the work of many experienced librarians. Sometimes a good internship or part-time job counts as experience—it did for me on my first job—but to claim that a library school course in administration qualifies a person for that level position is something neither the library schools nor the employers believe, and neither should students. This only makes them look foolish and provides some laughs for employers at their expense.[8]

SUMMARY

Last year I contacted a number of library schools in different parts of the country and asked for any comments regarding placement which might add to or emphasize information available in published sources. Some of the responses I received from deans and placement officers were particularly interesting; listed below are some general impressions of the things they were saying.

1. The number of graduates appears to be smaller.
2. The percentage of graduates placed does not appear to be significantly different.
3. Most schools reported an increase in the number of vacancy listings.
4. Most schools confirmed that they were emphasizing placement of their graduates in nontraditional areas of the information world and indicated that it was both proper and important to do so.
5. Most schools indicated they anticipated little or no change in placement during the current year (1981).

In response to my request for any special words of wisdom which these people would want to share with their job-searching graduates, the following ideas and actions were emphasized:

1. Join professional associations.
2. Tell everyone you know you're job hunting.
3. Search newspaper want ads thoroughly.
4. Be flexible and willing to look outside a limited geographical area.
5. Look beyond libraries.
6. Don't be discouraged.
7. Looking is time-consuming, and requires your best original thinking and effort.
8. Help yourself; write letters; make phone calls; even travel at your own expense, if the position sounds interesting to you.
9. Keep trying; don't give up, even after six months or more.
10. Don't limit the type of work you'll do on your first job.
11. Make personal contacts whenever possible.
12. Know what you want; a search is more effective with a goal.
13. Attend the seminar offered on how to make the initial inquiry; how to prepare résumés; how to prepare for interviews.
14. Place applications with nontraditional types of environments.
15. Looking for a position is a lot like taking a course; if placement were a 3- or 4-credit course, all graduates would be placed before graduation.

I found this last comment from one school official extremely interesting, but it does seem that all these comments indicate a considerable amount of support for most of the procedures examined here, and that the success or failure you experience in the placement process will depend to a large extent on the time and effort you devote to it.

I recently found an excellent article in *Changing Times* entitled "Eight Ways to Flub a Job Hunt." It begins with the remark: "The old adage about learning from your mistakes is one most job hunters can verify. Valuable lessons are learned in the course of trying to find a job, though some mistakes are apparent only in retrospect."[9]

While this particular article refers to job searching in general, the eight mistakes described came from the experiences of people on both sides of the employment fence, and a summary of these errors gives additional emphasis to many elements covered here for graduating library school students.

1. *Keeping the search to yourself.* This is a reminder of the value of letting everyone you know that you are looking for a job.

2. *Wasting time on blind ads.* This refers to want ads in which the employer is identified only by a box number—a procedure found by many to be unproductive, since it allows an employer to do things which would not be allowed if the employer's identity were revealed in the ad. This is an area I had not thought of before, but it is readily apparent that the concern expressed here is justified.
3. *Botching the interview.* The author recognizes here the importance of the personal interview in the job search. Ways in which people have been known to fail in such interview sessions are detailed in the article. Recognition of these problem areas may help you to avoid them.
4. *Talking salary too soon.* Comment on this error confirms the wisdom of indicating only that your salary requirement is open for discussion at this stage.
5. *Forgetting to compute the costs of a new job.* This is an area I had not examined, since I believe it has more relevance for persons who have been out in the field for a time. However, you should be aware of the fact that many employers can offer certain specific benefits and assistance in the cost of relocation if seriously interested in the candidate in question.
6. *Following only standard procedures.* The comments here confirm earlier advice about trying anything and everything in your job search, rather than limiting your approach to those areas considered standard operating procedures.
7. *Dropping the ball.* Here the author of the article comments on the need for you to follow up on any lead you get from any source. Mention is also made of the advisability of further correspondence and contact with the employer following a personal interview.
8. *Losing hope.* Virtually every library school official I contacted had something to say about the importance of not becoming discouraged, no matter how long the job search takes or how frustrating it becomes. Showing obvious signs of discouragement will do nothing to enhance your chances and may well cause adverse reactions to you in the process.[10]

It is time to assure you that there are jobs out there, and that the one you want may actually have your name on it. Following is a statement attributed to Brinton H. Stone, College Placement Officer, Office of Educational Career Services, University of California, Berkeley:

> It is not impossible to secure a position; it only seems impossible. All you need is a master's degree in your field and one or more of the following:
>
> - Arrival at the right place at the right time with the right qualifications for the right vacancy;

- Indefatigable patience, persistence and perseverance, coupled with exquisite tact, perception and courage;
- Determination to continue visiting prospective employers until an appropriate opening is available; avoiding the fatal extremes of becoming a pest or being forgotten;
- Ability to present your assets briefly and articulately;
- Miraculous good luck.[11]

I hope that the information in this paper will help you to build a concrete foundation on which to carry out your search for the position you want. It remains only for me to wish you the miraculous good luck of which Mr. Stone speaks so eloquently.

APPENDIX

Sample Résumé Form

ANNE ALICE McCOMB

1678 West Pinehurst Street, Columbus, South Carolina 34789
Phone: (618) 445-6934 or (618) 446-7943
Social Security Number: 126-34-5687

OCCUPATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To be associated with a college or public library working in a public service position.

EDUCATION

Winnington College, Hilltop, South Carolina, 1976-80; A.B., French, magna cum laude; minor, English.

Graduate School of Library Science, University of Western South Carolina, Fisher, South Carolina, 1980-81; M.S., Library Science.

Languages: French, bibliographic knowledge of Spanish and German.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Student Assistant, Winnington College Library, 1977-80. (One year in the Circulation Department and two years in the Reference Department)

Graduate Assistant, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Western South Carolina, 1980-81. (Graduate assistant assigned to Professor Carter, reference and bibliography instructor in the Library School)

SCHOLARSHIPS, ORGANIZATIONS, HONORS

Mary Edna Wilson Scholarship, Winnington College, 1976-80. (Full tuition and partial expenses)

Elected to Phi Beta Kappa, 1980.

Honorary Dean's List, Winnington College, 1976-80.

Editor, Winnington College Student Newspaper, *The Collegian*, 1978-80.

Class President, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Western South Carolina, 1980-81.

Student membership, American Library Association, 1980-81.

PUBLICATION

Scholarships and Work Study Programs. *Winnington Bulletin*, 36:345-51, November 1979.

REFERENCES

Cynthia Winslow, Dean of Women, Winnington College, Hilltop, South Carolina 34789.

Ronald Carter, Professor, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Western South Carolina, Fisher, South Carolina 34999.

Nancy Allen Smith, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Western South Carolina, Fisher, South Carolina 34999.

Henry Manson, Professor, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Western South Carolina, Fisher, South Carolina 34999.

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VITA

Robert F. Delzell, Professor of Library Administration Emeritus at the University of Illinois, served as Director of Personnel for the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign from 1967 until his retirement in 1978. Prior to that, he held the position of Administrative Assistant at the University of Illinois Library, served as chief of the Acquisitions Branch and Assistant to the Director at U.S. Air Force Air University (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama), and was chief of the Acquisitions Department at Washington University Libraries (St. Louis). He holds bachelor degrees from Drury College (Springfield, Mo.) and Washington University (St. Louis), did graduate work in French at Northwestern University, and received his MS in Library Science from the University of Illinois.

He has acted as a consultant for numerous library and personnel projects, and was keynote speaker for the 1977 seminar on "Paraprofessionals in Academic Libraries" sponsored by the Alabama Library Association. Mr. Delzell served as national president of Beta Phi Mu in 1969-70. He has been active on numerous ALA committees and award juries, and was chairman of the ALA Awards Committee, 1971-73. His numerous publications include: "The Administrative Assistant--Pragmatic Job Description." *College & Research Libraries* 28:382-86, Nov. 1967; (with Robert B. Downs) "Professional Duties in University Libraries," in *The Case for Faculty Status for Academic Librarians*, edited by Lewis C. Branscomb. Chicago:

ALA, 1970, pp. 9-21; and (with Judith F. Krug) "ALA Awards, Citations, Scholarships & Grants," *American Libraries* 2:1075-80, Nov. 1971.

Mr. Delzell currently resides in Springfield, Missouri, and pursues interests in consulting, speaking and travel.

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